Talmud - Mas. Berachoth 32a

Because it says, And whom I have wronged.[1]

R. Hama said in the name of R. Hanina: But for these three texts,[2] the feet of Israel's enemies[3] would have slipped. One is Whom I have wronged; a second, Behold as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in My hand, O house of Israel;[4] the third, And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.[5] R. papa said: We learn it from here: And I will put My spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.[6]

R. Eleazar also said: Moses spoke insolently towards heaven, as it says, And Moses prayed unto the Lord.[7] Read not el [unto] the Lord, but 'al [upon] the Lord, for so in the school of R. Eliezer alefs were pronounced like 'ayins and 'ayins like alefs. The school of R. Jannai learnt it from here: And Di-Zahab.[8] What is ' And Di-Zahab'? They said in the school of R. Jannai: Thus spoke Moses before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, the silver and gold [zahab] which Thou didst shower on Israel until they said, Enough [dai], that it was which led to their making the Calf. They said in the school of R. Jannai: A lion does not roar over a basket of straw but over a basket of flesh. R. Oshaia said: It is like the case of a man who had a lean but large-limbed cow. He gave it lupines to eat and it commenced to kick him. He said to it: What led you to kick me except the lupines that I fed you with? R. Hiyya b. Abba said: It is like the case of a man who had a son; he bathed him and anointed him and gave him plenty to eat and drink and hung a purse round his neck and set him down at the door of a bawdy house. How could the boy help sinning? R. Aha the son of R. Huna said in the name of R. Shesheth: This bears out the popular saying: A full stomach is a bad sort, as It says, When they were fed they became full, they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they have forgotten Me.[9] R. Nahman learnt it from here: Then thy heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord.[10] The Rabbis from here: And they shall have eaten their fill and waxen fat, and turned unto other gods.[11] Or, if you prefer, I can say from here. But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.[12] R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan. Whence do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, in the end gave Moses right? Because it says, And multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.[13]

And the Lord spoke unto Moses, Go, get thee down.[14] What is meant by 'Go, get thee down'? R. Eleazar said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, descend from thy greatness. Have I at all given to thee greatness save for the sake of Israel? And now Israel have sinned; then why do I want thee? Straightway Moses became powerless and he had no strength to speak. When, however, [God] said, Let Me alone that I may destroy them,[15] Moses said to himself: This depends upon me, and straightway he stood up and prayed vigorously and begged for mercy. It was like the case of a king who became angry with his son and began beating him severely. His friend was sitting before him but was afraid to say a word until the king said, Were it not for my friend here who is sitting before me I would kill you. He said to himself, This depends on me, and immediately he stood up and rescued him.

Now therefore let Me alone that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation.[16] R. Abbahu said: Were it not explicitly written, it would be impossible to say such a thing: this teaches that Moses took hold of the Holy One, blessed be He, like a man who seizes his fellow by his garment and said before Him: Sovereign of the Universe, I will not let Thee go until Thou forgivest and pardonest them.

And I will make of thee a great nation etc. R. Eleazar said: Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, seeing that a stool with three legs[17] cannot stand before Thee in the hour of Thy wrath, how much less a stool with one leg! And moreover, I am ashamed before my ancestors, who will now say: See what a leader he has set over them! He sought greatness